

Aden Auld's Hotel Register

by
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Few things in life are more mundane than a hotel register, a record of who stayed where, what nights, and for how much. However, in Brighton, Iowa the register of the Midland Hotel during the early years of this century was decidedly different. Aden W. Auld was the clerk at the Midland, and his inclinations toward art led him to create a highly unusual specimen of hotel register.

Each day, Auld decorated the Midland's register with fancy lettering and sketches, sometimes in color. His creations ranged from simple day and month headings to ambitious compositions incorporating patriotic imagery and detailed notes on historical and local events. The juxtaposition of Auld's drawings and the names of overnight guests makes the register a fascinating combination of art and daily journal. The Midland's register from October 1904 to October 1905 recently came to the State Historical Society of Iowa as a gift from Mr. Laban Fleak of Cedar Falls.

Aden Auld, born at Brighton in 1853, worked at the Midland Hotel from at least 1897. The Midland was owned by

L. C. Fleak, son of a prominent early settler and hotel keeper in Brighton. The elder Fleak ran the Eagle Hotel until it burned in the 1860s, and he then built the Fleak House. Following his death, the second hotel suffered the same fate, burning down in 1893. His son kept alive the family tradition with the Midland.

Auld also followed family tradition. His father, James Auld, settled in Brighton in 1849 as a chair maker and painter. He had been a practicing "steamboat painter" in Ohio according to his biography in the county history. Aden Auld must have been hard put to measure up to his father's local achievements; the elder Auld was mayor, town assessor, recorder, township clerk, secretary of the local Masonic Lodge, secretary of the Brighton American Bible Society, helped organize the first Sunday school, and served on the board of the Methodist Church. And he was the father of 12 children.

Aden Auld seems to have lead a less active life. His obituary (he died in 1906) noted he lived all his life in Brighton and he "was of a very quiet, unassuming

nature and had no desire for notoriety or fame." He is listed in several sources as a "painter," and the obituary even said "some of his work is exceptionally fine and his ability as an artist is known all over the United States."

Whatever his reputation, Auld's work on the Midland Hotel register was distinctive. He spent considerable time and effort on some of the sketches, producing elaborate scenes — often with patriotic themes. He frequently drew President Theodore Roosevelt (recently

come to office after McKinley's assassination), and he did many portraits of women. Some of the more complex drawings came on holidays such as St. Patrick's Day and Christmas.


Auld's hotel register is — to say the least — an unusual historical artifact. It is all the more interesting because one can scarcely imagine such a thing today, when checking into a hotel is a matter of credit cards and cash registers. In the day of the Midland Hotel, the personal touch was still very evident.

Date

FOR CATALOGUE OF HOTEL SUPPLIES, SEE BACK OF THIS BOOK

Hatch Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

U.S. Possesses Porto Rico 1898.

NAME	RESIDENCE	Time	Room	Remarks
				
<h1>TUESDAY</h1> <h2>OCT. 18</h2> <h3>1904.</h3>				
<i>Elmer</i>	<i>Burl</i>	<i>7 35</i>	<i>530</i>	
<i>W. S. A.</i>	<i>Osage</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1700</i>	

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 Hatch Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

NAME	RESIDENCE	Time
<p>THURSDAY OCT. 27-04</p> <p>Born October, 27-1858</p>		
<i>W. Van Gordon</i>	<i>Oskaloosa Ia</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>W. H. ...</i>	<i>W. H. ...</i>	<i>D</i>

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Date	NAME	RESIDENCE	Time	Room	Remarks
<p>FRIDAY NOVEMBER 18-1904</p>					
<i>1</i>	<i>P. G. Govey</i>	<i>Lutesville Ia</i>	<i>D</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>J. H. Newmod</i>	<i>Laurel Co</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>6:30</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>S. E. Brown</i>	<i>" " "</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>6:30</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>G. W. Cobb</i>	<i>Oskaloosa</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>7:00</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>A. H. ...</i>	<i>Delta</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>16</i>	

FOR CATALOGUE OF HOTEL SUPPLIES, SEE BACK OF THIS BOOK

Match Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

NAME	RESIDENCE	Time	Room	Remarks
 <h1 style="text-align: center;">MONDAY</h1> <h2 style="text-align: center;">NOV. 14</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">1904.</h3>				
<i>A. P. Weaver</i> <i>Burl.</i> <i>D 9</i>				

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Match Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

Union Stockyards Opened at Chicago 1888.

NAME	RESIDENCE	Time	Room	Remarks
 <h1 style="text-align: center;">A MERRY XMAS TO ALL</h1> <h2 style="text-align: center;">SUNDAY. DEC. 25-04.</h2>				
<i>W. C. Ferry</i> <i>city</i> <i>D</i>				

Date

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Match Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

30 Below 5-A NAME 15 Below at 3 p.m. Mrs. Hagan Dred RESIDENCE Time Room R

THURSDAY, FEB. 2, 05.

6 WEEKS MORE

Farragut Fleet left Ft Monroe 1862

NAME	RESIDENCE	Time	Room	Remarks
<i>Ames</i>				B
<i>J. E. Terry</i>	<i>Nebraska</i>			D
<i>E. W. Benschergast</i>	<i>Adrian Mich</i>			D

FOR CATALOGUE OF HOTEL SUPPLIES, SEE BACK OF THIS BOOK

Match Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

Mable Schofield's slayer, Chas Thomas sentenced for life.

NAME RESIDENCE Time Room Remarks

FIRST US CONGRESS 1789.

FIRST REPUBLICAN President 1861.

SATURDAY, MARCH, 4-05.

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Hatch Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

NAME: A WEARRIN OF THE GREEN
RESIDENCE: RIOY OF WOMEN SAVANAH GEORGIA 1864
Time Room Remark

MARCH 17- 465
Patrick the Apost
Patron Saint of Irele
Founded the Churr
at Kringford, Lou
County Down, Ulst
"Emeralds Isle"

St. PATRICKS DAY
FRIDAY
MAR. 17-05.

F. Gubris	7	City	B	2
C. Thomas	12	Wash. Iowa	B	3
			SR	

Date

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Hatch Hotel Register Company, Makers, Des Moines, Iowa

NAME: B.S. RATCLIFF BORN JULY 4th 1859
RESIDENCE: Hannibal Hamlin 1891.
Time Room

Vicksburg Surrendered 1863

Base Ball. Washington vs Brighton.

Fred Jenkins	14	City	B	2
Fannie Sales		City	B	2